

News Release



Controller of the State of California - Kathleen Connell

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTROLLER'S EDUCATION PLAN TEAMS COMMUNITY COLLEGES WITH HIGH-TECH PLAYERS

San Diego City College Selected for New Public-Private Partnership

SAN DIEGO, April 30 -- Uniting community colleges with major players in California's technology-based emerging industries is the goal of a new education program launched by State Controller Kathleen Connell today at San Diego City College. The self-sustaining program will utilize existing resources by linking local high-tech companies with nearby community colleges in an effort to better train students and stimulate economic growth.

"Our community colleges are an untapped resource for training Californians to participate in the state's new high-tech-based economy," said Connell, California's Chief Financial Officer. "It is only natural to pair our 106 community colleges with private-sector 'mentors' -- utilizing the infrastructure already in place."

The pilot program calls for five community colleges to partner with companies in what Connell has termed "emerging industries" -- high-tech communications, computer-aided fashion design, new media, international trade and biosciences. Businesses named to the program's statewide advisory board will act as an industry bridge to the community colleges by bringing first-hand industry knowledge into classrooms; offering on-site internships for students *and* teachers; supplying support and technical expertise to develop targeted curricula and loaning state-of-the-art equipment to schools for training.

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Industry executives and government officials named to the program's statewide advisory board, and whose companies will work specifically with San Diego City College on a program focusing on the bioscience industry include San Diego's: Dr. Tina Nova, President and Chief Operating Officer of *Nanogen Incorporated*; Ted Roth, Executive Vice President and CEO for *Alliance Pharmaceutical*; and Dr. Ivor Royston of the *Sydney Kimmell Cancer Center*.

"I've met with CEOs from across the state. Their number one concern isn't taxes or even regulation -- it's the quality of the labor force," said Connell. "Many businesses are suffering because California's education system is failing to produce the high-tech workers they need. If we're unable to meet the challenge presented by knowledge-based industries, there is a risk that high-tech California companies may choose to invest their dollars out of state."

"Public and private partnerships like these are the wave of the future," said Nova. "The program endorsed by Kathleen Connell recognizes the fact that companies such as ours, in order to grow, need a well-trained labor force." Roth added: "The State Controller's proposal focuses on one of our most critical problems -- finding sufficient numbers of skilled people to fill jobs that are being created in the bioscience industry. A public-private partnership is the quickest and clearest solution to our need, because I firmly believe that a path to the future for the bioscience industry passes through the community college classroom."

Connell's program will be supported by legislation she is proposing that is being carried by Assemblymember Ted Lempert (D-Palo Alto). The bill, AB 1149, will offer tax credits to companies that invest in California's colleges by donating the types of equipment used in the workplace, and by helping to fund campus facilities that mirror their own.

"The community colleges don't have the resources right now to purchase the equipment themselves," said Connell. "The passage of this bill will go a long way toward helping students compete, without spending general fund dollars."

San Diego City College is one of five schools named to the pilot program. Santa Monica College, City College of San Francisco and Mission College in Santa Clara were announced earlier this month -- each focusing on different emerging industries. One additional college will be named in May.